

Transcript of Reagan's White House News Parley

Following is a transcript of President Reagan's news conference in Washington yesterday, as recorded by The New York Times.

PRESIDENT REAGAN: I don't have any opening statement, but I just figured that it might be a good idea to come in here and get your questions now and then I won't have to tonight at the press party at the White House. So, Sam?

Attacks in Mideast

Q. Mr. President, your Secretary of Defense has said that Syria sponsored and directed the attack against the U.S. marines in October, and many officials in the Administration have said privately that Iran has been behind attacks in Kuwait and in Lebanon. My question, sir, is are we going to retaliate against the Governments of Syria or Iran?

A. No, we have taken a position and it is our policy that if this continues we're not there to shoot first or to enter into combat. But I'm never going to send our men anywhere where they would be allowed to defend themselves. And it's been our policy that if they are attacked they will defend.

Now we've seen these instances of being attacked and we have retaliated as nearly as we can against those who have actually done the attacking. And we want no conflict with Syria, certainly we're not there to enter into a war. And we continue to try and communicate and negotiate with them to let them know that if they'll stop shooting at us we won't be any problems between us.

Q. Sir, if I may, if Iran, if the Government of Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini, is behind some of this, how do we convince Iran to stop it?

A. No, the best evidence that we have — you couldn't go into court and say that Khomeini ordered this — but what we do know is that a group that has been taking fire for these attacks and has claimed that they're responsible for many of them is a group that seems to be of some size that is definitely with an Iranian connection. Now whether that's with the Government or that they just are Iranians and they seem to be — well, they voice things that would indicate that they are interested in a kind of a holy war, they are a sect in the Islamic world.

Marines in Lebanon

Q. Mr. President, you said last Saturday in your radio address that you would keep the marines in Lebanon until that country had internal stability. Sir, that country, respectfully, has never had internal stability. Isn't that the kind of open-ended commitment that will mean many more marines dying and years and years of American involvement there?

A. No, I think we're making more progress than appears on the surface, and the original goal was the withdrawal of the foreign forces, and then the reconstitution of the Government of Lebanon and helping them, as we have, to train and raise a force in which they can assume control over their own territory. The multinational force, they felt, was absolutely necessary and they still feel that way. They are able to do some maintaining or order as they would then have to move out to toward their borders once the foreign forces have gone.

Now this is still the goal, still the thing that we're trying to do. In Geneva, there was progress made there even those who are opposing each other within the country, the opposition factions, recognized the Gemayel Government and agreed upon that Government. Now the thing of the multinational force, what I'm trying to say, is there are two ways in which they could be withdrawn. One of them would be if we achieve our goal; the second, of course, would be if there was such a collapse of order that it was absolutely certain that there was no solution to the problem, there would be no reason for them to stay there.

Q. Are you saying, then, you would consider withdrawing the marines if it appeared that the Gemayel Government could not extend its authority beyond Beirut, and could not create some kind of coalition?

A. Well, you're getting into hypotheticals now of what situation. I'm simply saying that if there was a complete collapse and there was no possibility of restoring order there would be no purpose in the multinational force. But let me call to your attention that it's not just us, that all the nations of the multinational force, within a matter of days recently, have reaffirmed their determination

that the mission is sound and that we're all going to stay there. Helen?

Pressure for Exit

Q. Mr. President, isn't there growing political pressure for you to pull out fairly soon, and have we lost our role as peacemaker, and role of peacekeeper, into a role of escalating violence? My question is, there are reports that you will pull the troops out before the political conventions this summer.

A. I've seen those reports quoting unnamed sources again. Well, here's a named source, and I will tell you now. No decision that I'm going to make on anything of this kind is related to the election, or the convention or anything political. As a matter of fact, on all major issues I have reiterated more than once to our Cabinet that I don't want to hear the political ramifications of any major issue. And on this one there is no harder job, or part of this job, than putting our forces, let me say, some place where these young men and women could be endangered. And certainly what we do in that regard is not based on any political consideration.

Q. But won't it weigh in when you run in 1984?

A. You mean, of course, if I run for reelection. **Q.** What? You'll know Jan. 29, won't you? No, Helen, no, there's just no way that political, that politics, could be considered in an issue of this kind where the lives of our young people in uniform are involved. You, and then I'm going to move back there.

Contingency Tax

Q. Mr. President, we thought you were supposed to be in a budget meeting this morning, sir, although we're certainly delighted you came to see us instead. Does that mean that you've already decided the basics of next year's budget, and will there be a contingency tax as Secretary Regan suggested the other day? He seemed pretty solid on it.

A. Well, the canceling of the budget meeting this morning was just for another reason. No, we're not close to any decision. There are meetings in which we take up various segments of the budget, preliminary estimates and so forth, so they can be handled any time within the next few days.

But with regard to a contingency tax, first of all I can tell you there won't be any tax in 1984. The thing is that's always been back of the contingency tax — and I think this is what Don Regan was saying — was that such a tax would only be considered on the basis of getting the spending reductions that we must have. This whole matter of looking only at the deficit out there, and I don't minimize them, I've been preaching too long, for a quarter of a century now, against deficit spending and having these deficits, but the deficit is a symptom of the problem, a result of the problem.

The problem is the Federal Government is taking too big a percentage from the private sector of the gross national product. And the answer to getting rid of deficits and not running up more deficits comes with reducing that percentage that the Federal Government is taking.

Now if you get to the absolute point in which government cannot be any further reduced in size and cost, and then it is still out of line with revenues, you would have to make an adjustment on that side. But the — if you would look at it, actually when a government is taking too much money then it has got to match that with one of two ways. It's got to do a tax or it's got to reduce government costs, one or the other. Or it's got to borrow, I should say.

Now, either way you're taking more money from the private sector whether you borrow it or whether you tax it. And the real answer is to cure the disease, which is to get government down to a percentage figure that is consistent with having a sound economy.

Feldstein's Views

Q. Well, sir, a number of economists, including Mr. Feldstein, have said that it's because of your military spending and your tax cuts that we have these deficits, and that taxes, some kind of taxes, are going to be the only answer.

Mr. Feldstein has set himself apart from others in the Administration by his open, frequent discussion of subjects that White House aides say are best not discussed with a national election approaching — contingency taxes, the deficit and defense spending. But, Mr. Feldstein's critics have also come to suspect him of differences on policy, particularly over military spending.

Mr. Feldstein first came in for open criticism earlier this year, when he predicted unusually slow growth for the economy and high unemployment for the end of this year. Events proved him wrong, and he came to be called "Dr. Doom" by his critics.

Subsequently, Mr. Feldstein has said in a score of public speeches that Federal budget deficits exceeding \$200 billion through 1989 would distort the economy and derail the recovery.

Urges Contingency Tax

To reduce the deficits, he has urged enactment of the contingency tax increase on 1987 and personal income taxes that the President himself proposed in his budget this year. They would take effect in 1988 if the deficits have not declined substantially.

Associated Press
President Reagan talking to reporters at the White House.

I think that's been a little out of context, also. I reviewed the whole situation where Mr. Feldstein spoke on that, and he made an answer that I think any one of us could have made. The answer it was, said that, well, yes, if the defense budget were reduced, and if you hadn't tried that, yes, the budget would be — or the deficit would be — smaller. He did not say that it would be right to do so, the deficits, either to increase the tax or to reduce the defense spending.

Now let me point out that some 20 years ago, during the Kennedy Administration, defense spending was 4.8 percent of our budget. We're under 29 percent with regard to defense spending. We're spending about double on social reforms and social programs as to a percentage of the budget as was spent in those Kennedy years. So just to count the number of dollars, you have to look at defense and say, "What is necessary for our national security?" and then, if there's anything unnecessary, yes, eliminate it. But if everything there is necessary, and sound thinking for the national security, then you can't reduce beyond that point.

I've got to go to the back of the room here.

Arms Control Moves

Q. Mr. President, on arms control, do you expect to do anything, take any positive measure to bring the Soviets back to the negotiating table?

A. Yes, we are trying to stay in communication with them, and I have to believe that they will come back because it is to their advantage to come back. They stand to gain as much, or more, than anyone in communication with them. I think this is where there was something out of context. For example, we know that there are people who are not deserving of warfare who have been getting warfare. And one of our jobs has been, and not too well understood, to weed out — because every time someone who has the means and yet is subsisting on the help of their fellow citizens is doing that, they are reducing our ability to care for the truly needy. So we try to clean up there.

Well, if that's true there, I'm sure that it must be true in these private groups. The difference is that these very worthwhile charitable efforts on the part of churches and community groups, unions and others that are doing this, they have no way to establish eligibility. They can't set a rule and say we're going to quiz you and determine whether — they have to accept that people that come and ask for help must be needed.

But on the other hand, if there are people who will cheat with regard to getting welfare, I think it's possible that some might be cheating in this other. But that doesn't mean that you close down the private groups, because I'm quite sure that the vast majority of the people who seek aid and help are of benefit to them and their families.

Q. His answer was pretty all-inclusive.

A. What?

Q. His answer was pretty all-inclusive, that they were going there, they had the money, they didn't want to pay.

A. All we know is we had some anecdotal incidents, too, that we knew about.

Q. Don't forget to tell in Illinois and New Hampshire, Mr. President.

Meese Hunger View

Q. You were? **A.** You were? Well, let me just say, I'll volunteer instead of an opening statement, a closing statement on that. I believe the manner in which that's been treated by a great many of them is totally out of context with the entire interview which he gave. The policy, and my own feeling in this Administration is that if there is one person in this country hungry, that is one too many, and we're going to do

In his news conference today, the President stressed that there would be no tax increase next year, a possibility that few held to be likely in an election year. As a politician who had been seen earlier in the deficit spending years, Mr. Reagan said, he did not want to "minimize" the current Federal deficits. But he said this was "a symptom of the problem" in which the President was monopolizing too large a share of the gross national product in tax and borrowing.

Recent White House suspicion of Mr. Feldstein's views on military spending are unfounded, the President's spokesman said. In the President's view, Mr. Feldstein usually endorses it and frequently invokes the President's view that military spending is relatively lower than it has been.

Lower Relative Share

"When I mention defense spending," Mr. Feldstein said today, "I almost invariably point out that defense is 6.8 percent of the gross national product, well below the 9.1 percent in 1960."

Mr. Reagan made a similar observation in his remarks today: "Now let me point out that some 20 years ago, dur-

what we can to alleviate that situation. And I happen to know that he feels the same way.

Now one journalist the other night on one of the weekend talk programs said that we should be out on the front steps of the White House cheering those private agencies that are providing meals and providing evening dinners and lunches and so forth to the needy. Well, I may not be out on the front steps shouting, but you bet I'm cheering them. As a matter of fact, this is part of our private initiative program; we've done everything we can to encourage this. Wherever possible, we have supplied surplus foods to them.

Because even whatever we've done, we're doing more to feed the hungry in this country today than has ever been done by any Administration. More money is being spent, more people are getting food stamps, all of these things we're doing. But this private-sector aid is essential to help provide some of those things over and above bare necessities that make life worth living, and the private sector is doing that and doing it splendidly. Not only with the meals being served, but with food distribution centers that we're helping there, also.

But that, and all ties into the commission that some have said, why, don't we know that people are hungry? That wasn't the purpose of the commission. I'm waiting now for the January report. We get anecdotes that some of you have reported on, individual cases or something, of people that are hungry. What we want to find out is why? Is it a lack of, of a fault in our distribution system at the government level? Or is it that there are people out there who don't know what's available to them or how to find their way to a government program? Or is there — well, I think I've covered most of what it could be that they don't know how to find this, that and that somewhere are bungling bureaucratic-wise in making adequate distribution.

But this is what we want to find out, is there something we can resolve so that there won't be anyone, either through their own ignorance of what's available or through failing between the cracks in a bureaucratic process, that we can resolve that and see that there is no one overlooked who's hungry.

Weeding Out Job

Q. The statement was that people might be going to the soup kitchen because they wanted to do it. You don't think that's what's happening?

A. Well, this, I think, was distorted in the reporting of that — and that I'll only say because it was part of my statement, and then I'm going to run before you ask any more questions. That, I think this is where there was something out of context. For example, we know that there are people who are not deserving of welfare who have been getting welfare. And one of our jobs has been, and not too well understood, to weed out — because every time someone who has the means and yet is subsisting on the help of their fellow citizens is doing that, they are reducing our ability to care for the truly needy. So we try to clean up there.

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A. All we know is we had some anecdotal incidents, too, that we knew about.

Q. Don't forget to tell in Illinois and New Hampshire, Mr. President.

President Moves to Patch Rift With His Senior Economic Adviser

By PETER T. KILBORN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14 — President Reagan today appeared to be trying to patch things up with his chief economist, Martin S. Feldstein. The chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors has been publicly criticized in recent weeks by the White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, for his remarks on the Federal budget deficit, taxes and military spending.

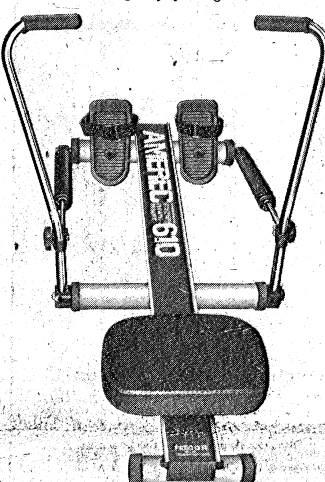
"I think there's been a little out of context there," Mr. Reagan said at his news conference today. "I reviewed the whole situation where Mr. Feldstein spoke on that, and he made an answer that I think any one of us could have made."

Mr. Feldstein, who watched the conference on television, said: "The President's remarks were correct. I think he stated correctly what I have said in the past."

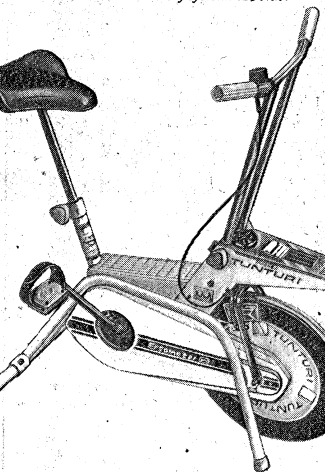
Matters of Style

Mr. Feldstein's differences with others in the Administration, notably Treasury Secretary Donald T. Regan, and some members of the White House staff, have concerned matters of style and style more than policy.

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If One American Is Going Hungry, Reagan Says, It's 'One Too Many'

By FRANCIS X. CLINES

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14 — President Reagan said today that while "it must be true" that some underserving people lined up at charity soup kitchens, his Administration's policy was that even one American going hungry was "one too many."

The President, in a brief meeting with White House reporters, vented on his own into the controversy stirred last week by his counselor, Edwin Meese 3d. Mr. Reagan said without being asked about the subject that he felt that Mr. Meese's remarks had been "distorted" in some accounts.

The President's comments, in which he, like Mr. Meese, contended his Administration had done more than any other to feed the hungry, quickly renewed the controversy. House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. charged that the President's statement "does not square with Administration actions."

The Speaker said that while Congress recently approved \$44 million in aid with surplus food, "the Reagan people have refused to release this funding." White House officials denied the charge, saying the Administration intended to use the funds after a "procedural problem" had been worked out with Congress.

He Evades Re-election Issue

Asked once more about his presumed re-election announcement late next month, Mr. Reagan smiled and said, "You'll know Jan. 29, won't you?"

In volunteering his comments on the hunger issue, the President reflected the concern of his political strategists that Mr. Meese's statements last week had been seized on by the Democratic Presidential candidates and other critics who have long accused the Administration of lacking compassion toward the poor.

Mr. Meese said last Thursday that the Administration earnestly sought to solve any real problem of hunger but that there was only "anecdotal" information about it that far, no "authoritative" evidence of hungry children.

Speculating that people who "have money" went to soup kitchens voluntarily, Mr. Meese declared, "I know we've had considerable information the food is free and that's easier than paying for it."

President Reagan strongly defended his counselor, contending that Mr. Meese had been quoted "fairly out of context" in some accounts.

"The policy," the President said, "and my own feeling in this Administration is that if there is one person in this country hungry, that is one too many, and we're going to do what we can to alleviate that situation."

In describing his own suspicion that underserving people used the food programs run by private charities, Mr. Reagan said it was based on the fact that "we know there are people who are not deserving of welfare who have been getting welfare" from government agencies.

"Well, if that's true there," he continued, "I'm sure that it must be true in these private groups. The difference is that these very worthwhile charitable efforts on the part of churches, community groups, unions and others that are doing this, they have no way to establish eligibility."

What Meese Said to Reporters

Following is a transcript of questions and answers about hunger in an interview with Edwin Meese 3d, the Presidential counselor, by news agency reporters, as recorded by The Associated Press. President Reagan cited the text yesterday in charging that Mr. Meese's statements had been reported out of context.

Q. Mr. Meese, possibly a naive question, philosophically, how do you balance the need for spending reductions with judgments by, I think, authoritative organizations in the field, that, for instance, there are too many hungry children in America, philosophically, how do you balance the need, and I think everyone agrees on the need to reduce the deficit with children, not adults, children?

A. Well, I don't know of any authoritative figures that there are hungry children. I've heard a lot of anecdotal stuff, but I haven't heard any authoritative figures. As a matter of fact, that's one of the reasons why the President appointed a task force on food assistance to get to the bottom of some of these allegations that have been substantiated until now.

So if there are hungry children, the question is why are they hungry. The United States Government is spending more on food assistance than it ever has in history. And we are spending it for more categories of people, we are spending it for higher levels of income than we ever have before. The real question is if people are hungry, if there are such individuals, particularly children, then why are they hungry?

When Report Is Expected

Q. When is this commission's report due?

A. I believe the commission was appointed about three months ago, I would imagine they will finish their work and report sometime the end of this year or early next year.

Q. There is a date, I've forgotten it. I've forgotten it myself.

Q. What would be your own hunch as to why they are hungry if there are such hungry children?

A. I don't know, that's what we want to find out.

Q. An administrative problem?

A. First of all, you'd have to find out if there are hungry children and you'd have to find out why. When we're spending more than ever before in history at a time of economic recovery, I can understand why there would be additional need during a period as we had during the recession — of course, that's when the resources were increased to meet those needs — but I think that with all of the resources of the Federal Government, all of the resources of the local governments, with all of the voluntary organizations, if people are going hungry there must be some problem that's not been addressed and it isn't the lack of funds.

Q. And pending the report of the commission, you don't know what the reasons are for the allegations?

A. Oh, I think some of the allegations are purely political.

Sources of Criticism

Q. Hungry kids we were talking about a few minutes ago makes me curious, because I can almost hear some of the Government's critics following upon your statement almost immediately with a hue and cry of the Administration and hungry kids and charges that you've heard before about whether or not the Government has a heart, whether the Administration has a heart, the Reagan Administration in this case. How do you feel about that, do you feel that you get a lot of unjust criticism? Where does it come from?

A. Well, first of all when you say hungry kids, you're talking about allegations there are hungry kids. There may be situations in which there are hungry people and that's why it's Administration is concerned as to if that is true, why, I was responding, "either to somebody saying there had been authentic accounts of hungry people. I haven't seen those unauthenticated accounts, I doubt if anyone else has."

Q. I used the word authoritative in the sense that I would call you authoritative.

A. Authoritative, O.K., I don't know

who has been the authoritative source.

Q. Well, various organizations, I forget their names.

A. Well, I think you'd have to look at what those organizations are and what their motivations are. I do feel, as far as your questions is concerned, I think this Administration has demonstrated its heart. The President has said one of the principal reasons for this Government, the Federal Government under his leadership, is to provide for those who are truly needy. Each of the steps that we have taken, whether it's budget cuts, whether it's reform of programs, whether it's restructuring of spending, I think the President is sure that those who are truly in need have been taken care of.

Welfare Reform Program

Q. The welfare reform program, which has been a very successful program, where even organizations that have done evaluations, and those organizations are not particularly friendly to the Administration, have had to admit that the welfare reforms are working. In those welfare reform programs we have made sure that no one who is truly in need is penalized.

Authority of Reports Debated

Q. Then there is no report and you have not seen any report in three years in office that would show that there is poverty and hunger in this country?

A. I didn't say that. I have seen reports, whether they are authoritative.

Q. Nothing in Government, inside the Government?

A. Inside the Government, I don't think I have ever seen a report inside the Government. You mean from a Governmental bureau? Not that I know of.

Q. Any kind of an authoritative study at all. So you base your statement —

A. I don't believe that I have ever seen an authoritative study, no.

Q. So you base your statements on the fact that you don't really know.

A. Well, I base my statement on the fact that there have been allegations made in public that there are hungry people and that's why the President

Motives of People Questioned

Q. Why do people go to soup kitchens on holidays?

A. Well, because they want to get food. But the people are not being cared for, the people are going hungry involuntarily, that's why the President has appointed this task force on food assistance, if that is true and if so, why.

Q. You think others are going hungry voluntarily?

A. Well, I think some people are going to the soup kitchens voluntarily. I know we've had considerable information that people go to soup kitchens because the food is free and, and that's easier than paying for it.

Q. You think they can afford it and they still go?

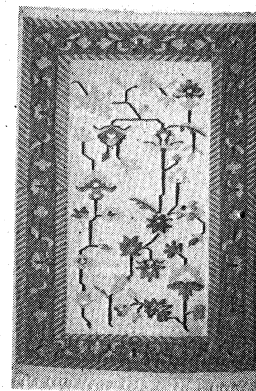
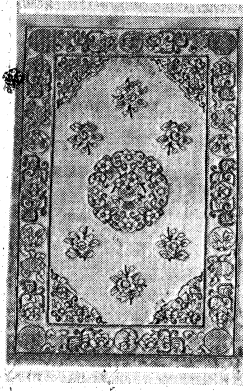
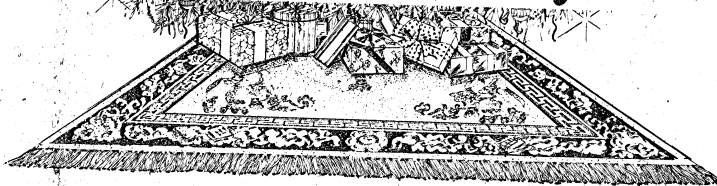
A. I think they have money. We have a system in this country that virtually everyone is taken care of by one program or another. Certainly, who is truly in need and a lot of people who are on the margin.

How Serious Problem Is

Q. How serious do you think the problem of poverty is in the country at this point?

A. I think the situation is less serious as far as poverty is concerned than it was three years ago. This is primarily because President Reagan's economic policies have done something for low income citizens that no Government program could ever do, that is, to reduce the inflation rate. The spending power of people on limited incomes has been vastly increased in the course of these last two and a half to three years simply by the reduction in inflation. That gain is greater than any program could ever give them.

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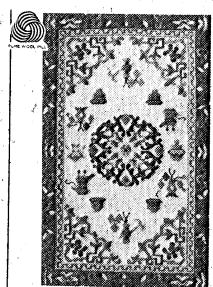
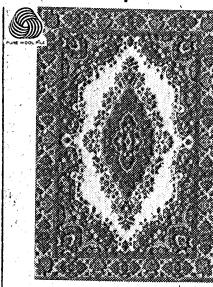
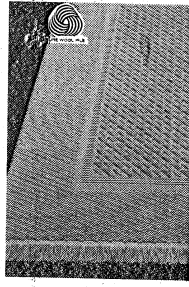
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7'10"x7'10"	\$279	\$100

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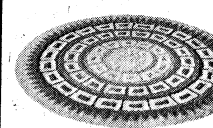
Handmade imports in glorious Aubusson and classic designs. Blue, ivory, light blue, navy and brown grounds.

Size	Value	Sale
2'4"x4'	\$100	\$39
4'6"x6'	\$199	\$89
6'9"x6'9"	\$299	\$129
9'12"x9'12"	\$399	\$179
10'14"x10'14"	\$1499	\$579

Remnant Sale!

Save 60% to 80% off regular square yard prices

Find some of our remnants in various textures, pile heights, sizes, styles and colors. Including half rolls in a wide variety of colorations. Wool Berbers included. All at huge savings!



Handmade Imported Designer Round Area Rugs

Unique round shapes, dramatic colorations, huge savings.

Size	Rd.	Sale
5'8"	\$19	\$59
7'6"	\$29	\$99

ABC CARPET
891 BROADWAY
CORNER E. 19th St.
MANHATTAN

Free Parking: 20th St. Garage
(Between 6th & 8th Aves.)

ABC

ABC RUGS
888 BROADWAY
CORNER E. 19th St.
MANHATTAN

Free Parking: 17th Street
(Between 8'way & 6th Ave.)

carpet co., Tele. 677-6970

MON. TUES. WED. 9 A.M. TO 6 P.M. THURS. 9 A.M. TO 5 P.M. OPEN SUNDAY 11 AM TO 5 PM

FRI. TO 6 P.M. SAT. 9 A.M. TO 6 P.M.